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Permission in 'Very Strong Terms'

Student Group Was Asked by CIA To Keep Aid a Secret, Officer Says

CPYRGHT

By Gerald Grant
Washington Post Staff Writer

A top officer of the National Student Association said yesterday that the CIA tried to persuade the student organization not to divulge its connection with the intelligence agency.

Richard Stearns, interna-

tional vice president of the NSA, said he would not characterize the CIA pressure as "coercion," but as "a very strong presentation of their views in very strong terms."

Stearns said that representatives of the CIA met with top officers of the NSA last week after the student leaders decided to tell their side of the story before Ramparts magazine published an article linking NSA with CIA.

He declined to say whether the meeting was held at the CIA, but he said that it was a face-to-face encounter in which the CIA spokesman made plain "what the consequences (of disclosure) would be."

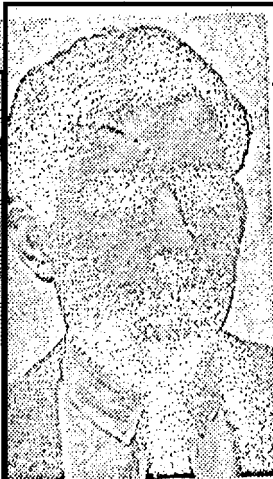
Asked to elaborate before he returned to a meeting room from which reporters were barred, Stearns said the CIA warned about the "obvious consequences."

Then, holding up a Washington newspaper, he pointed to a banner headline on an impending House inquiry of the CIA and said, "consequences like these."

A CIA spokesman said last night that the agency would have "no comment."

Stearns and the other top officers were closeted yesterday at the International Inn with the NSA's national supervisory board, the members of which claimed they were ignorant of the CIA's role.

Samuel W. Brown, a Harvard Divinity School student and chairman of the supervisory board, said he was "shocked and disgusted" when he learned of the CIA's involvement less than two weeks ago. He felt the whole



RICHARD STEARNS



The Washington Post

SAMUEL W. BROWN
... discuss CIA tie

affair was "morally disgusting."

Brown said the incident was a "kind of corruption that has taken place in government." He assailed the

CIA for its "unjustifiable extension of power" and criticized NSA leaders for the "violation of trust placed in them by the constituency of the organization." He exempted officers for the past two years who had worked to terminate the CIA relationship.

The supervisory board, 10 students elected by region, has the power to fire officers and propose major changes in the organization.

But Brown said he did not anticipate any moves to fold the student group or to phase out its international activities.

Termination of all links to CIA and re-establishing the credibility of the NSA were the top items on the student's agenda, he said.

W. Eugene Groves, president of NSA, was asked if any NSA staffers had been part of the CIA's intelligence gathering network.

"Everybody I talked to in the past insisted he had not given any sensitive information to the CIA," Groves said. "What they did was to express their views on what positions the government might take" in response to what students were thinking elsewhere in the world.

What did he mean by "sensitive information?" Groves replied: "Anything that would hurt anybody."

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